

## A Welcome and Call for Collaborators

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**Cite as:** Ducar, J. (2024). A Welcome and Call for Collaborators. *Metropolitan Universities*, 35(1), 10-11. DOI: 10.18060/28046

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### Introduction

The initial seed of what would later become the Place-Based Justice Network (PBJN) was planted a decade ago when a group of like-minded higher education leaders came together to interrogate the multi-layered relationships between campuses and their intrinsically linked communities. Eventually, a learning community committed to transforming higher education and our communities by deconstructing systems of oppression through place-based community engagement formalized as the Network and has since grown to represent dozens of institutions.

Together, we have built up a national infrastructure grounded in prioritizing self and collective care for those working to shift not only individual, institutional practices of campus-community engagement but also the cultural norms representative of boundary spanners at large. Our values have given us the opportunity to act with affirmation and create pathways for accountability for collaborative teams within the academy. Significantly, PBJN has invested in key programmatic responses to what our membership experiences in a field affected by external pressures on our collective understanding of what social and racial justice praxis can and should look like.

For us, the priorities of a) supporting emergent BIPOC leadership, b) elevating bright spots of co-developed and community-informed responses to societal challenges, and c) coming together for peer support and reflection on the tensions inherent in our positional goals remain paramount. As ongoing culture clashes continue to amplify our frayed social and civic fabric,

we, as a Network, will continue to stretch into our field's leading edges and potentially iterate to step more intentionally into our role as thought leaders and productive agitators within the academy.

We have shifted and grown steadily to represent a growing diversity of institutional types. My hope is to continue that momentum with new membership across Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), community colleges, and Ivy League schools, increasing our ability to enact positive change across the country through community-engaged practices. To me, generative communities like PBJN are the only way for our sector to remain deeply connected to the priorities of lived experiences while also re-centering frameworks for joy and thriving like asset-based community development (ABCD), Equity-Centered/Liberatory Design and Community Cultural Wealth. Equitable repair demands increasingly expansive tables to set partnership narratives and collective action goals for our field. We welcome you to join us in our next great act and celebrate the practitioner-scholars across our membership featured in this collaborative issue of *Metropolitan Universities* journal.

**Keywords:** higher education, community engagement, place-based engagement, social justice, racial justice, professional network